

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

decision making: a process most literary characters undergo, involving a choice and the effects of making the choice

framing a question: a way to clarify a choice to be made, writing the choice as a question

options: possible actions or ways to respond to the choice

immediate consequence: short-term effect of an action or response

outcome: long-term effect that may change the characters or their situations

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Identify the decision the character must make. Imagine a character who is now at the point where he or she has to make an important decision. Put yourself in the character's place. State the decision as a question.

Step 2: Brainstorm the paths you think the character might consider. Work out what options, or possible responses to the question, the character may choose. Include the obvious paths, but also consider paths that may sound unusual, strange, or risky.

Step 3: Ask what consequence or complication might arise from each path. Choosing a path seldom leads directly to deep or lasting results. Instead, it causes wrinkles, upsets, even crises, quick immediate changes, that, in turn, lead to a more final outcome or deeper change.

Step 4. Now consider the long-lasting outcome. Ask yourself how far-reaching the character's choice is. Will it affect him or her only now or also in the future? Will it affect only the character or other people as well?

Step 5. Weigh each decision path. Consider each choice, its immediate consequence, and its long-term result. Doing so helps you predict which path the character is likely to take. As you weigh the choices, use what you know about the character and about human nature. Will the character make the right choice? What does *right* mean for the story? Is the right decision the easiest one? Or, is it the one that takes a long time to pay off?

Step 6. Evaluate the decision the character makes. Once you have read further into a story, drama, or novel, compare your own decision making to the character's actual choices and results. Ask yourself why the character made the choices he or she did, and how it has changed the situations and characters. Give your opinion and reasons as to whether the decision-making was or was not "right" for the story.